Connecticut Historical Society
BULLETIN

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ABRAHAM PIERSON

I Abraham Pierson was born on the 11th day of April AD. 1756—appears by Church Record was Baptized the next day—I was only son of Deacon Dodo Pierson I was by Descent the fourth generation from Revd. Abraham Pierson Pastor of the first Church in Killingworth & first Rector of Yale College—In Novr. 1774 I began school keeping & continued the business for 11 or 12 winters at different places generally in the District in which I now live—On the 31st day of March AD. 1777—I was admitted a member of the Church of Christ in North Killingworth then under the Pastoral care of Revd. William Seward—May 25. 1780. I A. Pierson was Married to Miss Lydia Redfield July 16. 1780. Lydia my wife was admitted a member in full Communion with this Church—

Friday May 11th 1781. My wife was delivered of a female child it was born alive made some noise once & within 6 or 8 minutes expired—

Tuesday evening February 5. 1782 Died Revd. William Seward.

Wednesday Septr. 25: 1782. Revd. Henry Ely Ordained.

Monday evening January 13th 1783 I had another Daughter born weighed 8 lb 5 oz. It appeared the most well forward & likely Child I have ever had until Friday evening it was siezed with Convultion in its bowels—on satturday evening it was Baptized named—lydia—Sabbath morning January 19th. it Died—

Friday April 25. 1783—the House Mr. King owns was Raised—

August 26. 1784—Died John Punderson Seward—

At a Church Meeting August 23. 1785—Deacon Willcox Hezh. Lane Esqr. Mr Jehiel Evarts & Abraham Pierson were chosen a Church Committee to discourse in private with offending members & if need be bring their offence before the Church—

April 4: 1794. Abraham Pierson Esqr. was chosen Deacon of this Church—I have frequently been appointed a Delegate by this Church to attend ecclesiastical councels within 32 years past

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I have served the Society in a number of public Offices was Chosen Treasurer Decr. 1777 & Treasurer of the school Society when it was first formed & held them both till I resigned them in Octr. 1814. when I removed to Durham to live with my son—

I also served the Society many years as Committee Choirister Visitor of schools &c &c.—

I have served in the Military Department—being chosen Clerk of the Militia Company when about 18 years old at the Commencement of Revolutionary War & servd in all grades of office through the War & until I was dismissed from being Captain in May. 1789—

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for the term of about 30 years & until bodily infirmity prevented I assisted in settling a pretty many Estates

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I have served Town in a great variety of offices of almost every kind from the time I was 21 till Infirmity prevented such as Selectman. Constable Lister Surveyor of Highways &c. &c. After the death of Col. Elliott I was appointed Town Clerk which office I held till I resigned it when I removed to Durham October 1814 being almost 28 years—I held the office of Justice of the Peace from 1786-till 1818—being 32 years always endeavouring to bring the parties to an amicable settlement where ever I Judged that the true interest of the Parties & Peace & tranquility of Society was better promoted in that way than by Litigation—five years I served as a Justice of Peace & Quorum Middlesex County From October session AD. 1788—to May session 1809—inclusive I was appointed to Represent this Town in the General Assembly of this State Twenty four sessions—for Twenty years last past Deafness has been gradually increasing upon me—

August 5 & 12. 1822

ABRAHAM PIERSON'S JOURNAL

Killingworth June ye. 2d. A.D. 1776
Abraham Pierson's Book; Written to keep in memory Some things, which may hereafter be useful.

New Stile began September ye. 14th AD. 1752

I Abraham Pierson was born in N. Killingworth on Lord's Day April ye. 11th Anno Domini 1756 about 4 of the Clock After-Noon. While I was young I had but little opportunity of going to School having Sometimes not more than 5 or 6 weeks Schooling in a year and at most not more than 10 weeks and many years there was no School at all but notwithstanding the little Schooling I had yet being instructed by my Parents I became able when about 7 years old to read tolerable well in a Bible So as that when I was 8 years old I had almost read the Bible through I read once every morning Constantly when there was no School and began to learn to write and within a few years I made Some Progress in Arithmetic learn'd the Ground Rules and Several other useful Rules The fore part of the next winter after I was 13 years of age I was confined Several weeks being very helpless with the Rheumaties & other disorders After the Rheumeties had in Some measure left my limbs it Struck to my Stomack which caused a pain in my breast and Side at turns and also a Choaking to that degree that it almost Stoped my breath when I

lay down and I have been troubled with this difficulty at turns more or less ever Since particularly when I overdo or take any Cold

Soon after I became able to move there was a School kept by Mr. William Seward Junr. who had then just completed a Liberal Education the School began Sometime in January 1770 and was kept 10 weeks I went Steady to this School and learnt to repeat the English Grammar as in Dilworth's Spelling Book all except a few Pages by heart I improved Some in reading and writing and also made good progress in Arithmetic I learned almost all the useful Rules in Arithmetic I learned to understand the use of Decimal Fractions and the art of Guaging Casks of different kinds I also learned many useful Problems in Geometry I had thoughts at this time of proceeding to a Liberal Education but it being difficult to leave home and for other reasons which were important I did not proceed

In the year 1773 at the begining of Harvest there were 2 or 3 extreme hot Days and I hurt my Self with the heat and also by drinking Cold water when I was thirsty & very hot by this imprudence I became lame and helpless in Some degree also Cloged at my Stomack but not withstanding my unfitness for labour At this time yet I went to Cradleing one Day with another man both of us Cradled 5 acres of English Grane after my days work I rodenear 4 miles in the Cool of the evening without any Coat and took a hard cold which brought on the Rheumaties and by the means of this Surfeit and Cold I was confined & very helpless for Several weeks and was not fit for hard Labour under 2 or 3 Months this Surfeit agravated my former Choaking which I fear will attend me during Life

In the year 1774 In the months of January & February I went to School to Mr. Thomas Silliman Schoolmaster at Chester 3 weeks at which time I improved Considerable in writing & learnt Some useful Rules in Arithmetic It may be observed that in the year 1773 I began to learn the Rules of Singing and in the year 1774 in the Spring we had a Singing Master 2 months at which time I became almost master of Vocal musick In January 1772 my dade was chosen Tavern keeper and he began to keep Tavern the June following when I was about 16 years old and I had the chief care of tending the Bar and changing Money which was Some benefit to me we kept Tavern 4 years and was Chose again but refused keeping any longer I would also observe that about the years 73 & 74 I began the Study of Geography and Philosophy I borrowed Books till I could buy them and made Some proficiency.

In the year 1774 in the beginning of the Months of November I went down to Stanwich to live with Revd. Mr. Seward (who was a few years before Settled there in the Ministry) I keep a School there 13 weeks I had 6/o york mony for each Schoolar they Subscribed for to the day School I had Sometimes 31 or 32 & Sometimes not more 16 or 20 I also kept a Night-School 4 Nights in a week I had commonly about 9 or 10 Schoolars they Subscribed to pay 4 Shillings a piece for Liberty of the Night School my wages amounted to about £12—S14 New York money but I had to Pay 7/o pr week for my board

I came home from Mr. Sewards about the first of March 1775

In this term of time I improved considerable in the Sciences of Geogrephy and Philosophy I also Studied upon Astronomy and got Some Some [sic.] Rational Idea of these Sciences

Whilst I lived with Mr. Seward I took a notion to proceed to a Liberal education I bought a Lattin Grammar and Studied Several weeks while I keep School and Sent word home but it being So difficult I did not proceed the living with Mr. Seward was a vast benefit to me as to Learning & Behaviour

The Spring & Summer following I Spent in farming as usual (but Spent my leisure time in learning) until the 30th. Day of October: 1775 when I began to keep a School at North-Guilford Which I kept for the term of 12 weeks my wages for the Day School was forty Shillings per. Month & my board I keep a Night School 3 nights in a week & had one Shilling pr. Night my day School at first was Small but the latter part of the time I had generally about 30 Sometimes 33 my day School made very good proficiency Especially in Spelling I had about 10 that come Steady to Night School Some of them gained very fast in Arithmetic I was urged to tarry longer there but had undertook to keep a School 3 months at home I began to keep this School in Killth. January ye. 29th: 1776 I agreed to keep a Night School 24 Nights which Shortned my time 2 weeks So that I keep but 10 weeks my wages was £ 7- S 10 I boarded myself my Day School generally consisted of about 20 Sometimes 24. Night School Sometimes 15 or 16 & Sometimes but few my day Schoolers at this time made some proficiency in Oratory.

I would observe that on the 4th. Day of February when I had not kept this School but one week I was taken Sick with the Pleurisy (which distemper prevailed very much in the Parish for 3 or 4 months about this time) I was also exercised with the Rheumatism and a very hard fever I was very helpless and confined to my Room for 2 weeks at which time I began to amend Slowly and with much difficulty I began to keep School again on Monday when I had been Sick but 3 weeks This Sickness renewed in me a great Concern for my Soul (which I had had more or less for Some time before) It renewed and Strenghned my resolutions for a better Life after taking Several opportunities to discourse with Revd. Mr. Seward and receiving Some hopes with regard to my future Estate I was desirous to own the Covenant which I proceeded to do Publickly on Sunday March ye. 31 AD. 1776 but one or two weeks before I was 20 years old. I was at this time employed in keeping the School before mentioned and on April the 25th (being in a poor State of health as I had but in part recovered from my Sickness)

I Rode to Chester to make a Short Visit at Revd. Mr. Sillimans I went with two of Mr. Sillimans Sons & Mr. David Seward Junr. of Guilford unto Connecticut River we procured a Small Boat with a Small Sail to it and went to Sailing up & down the River chiefly on my account hoping that it might be Beneficial to my health we Saw a large Brig at a distance coming up the River but She going very Swift and we attempting to go a Board of her She came upon us Suddenly while we were before her and overset our Boat in a Sudden and Surprizing manner and turned us into the deep I was burthened with Clothes and not Skilled in Swiming was therefore in great distress and almost dispaired of Life but there were fishers about 20 or 30

Rods off who made haste to come with their Boat for our releif and through a wonderful Interposing providence we were all taken into their Boat none receiving much harm except myself who was much filled with water and brought almost to death

I finished keeping School on the last day of April the Monday following being the first Monday in May was Training Day on which day I was made choice of for a Clark of the Military Company in Sd. Parish then under the Command of Capt. Steevens. September ye. 7th. A.D. 1776 the Militia were ordered to march towards New york we marched the 10 Day I was well till Octr. ye. 4 & was taken Sick about a weak after I moved out to Rye to recruit my health after about a fortnight I returned to Camp again & remained here till November ye. 20 then the Regiment were discharged on on [sic.] Satturday the 23d. Day I got home in the evening,

Septr. ye. 11 while I was on the march toward New york I purchased a large old fashioned Watch for 14 Dollers, November ye. 19th. I Swaped it away & gave 5 Dollers to boot,

December ye. 6th. the Militia were alarmed again I went with them as far as Town to go to New London on the 7th. Day but heard the enemy were gone & So came home again. December ye. 23 at a Society meeting I was Chosen Choirister.

January ye. 1t. A.D. 1777 bought a Desk of Osborn Steevens Cost five pounds Cash. December ye. 26th. AD 1776 I began to keep a School in the Meeting district in this place I kept 3 months had £2—S15 per month but Shortened the time 2 weeks by keeping 24 Nights my day School consisted of upwards of 30 but I had not more than 26 or 27 at once I had Sometimes more than 20 at the Night School I finished the School on the 14th. day of March AD. 1777.

About this time being exercised with Strong convictions & great concern with Regard to my future State I had a great desire to obey the command of a Crucified Saviour by approaching to his holy Table and after many renewed resolutions to live agreeable to Such a Solemn Profession & with the advice of Revd. Mr. Seward on Sunday March ye 30th. AD. 1777 I was admitted into full Communion with the Church of Christ in this place.

On Friday April the 11th. 1777 I became of full Age.

On Sunday April ye. 27th. the Militia & Alarm List were order'd to march in haste to New Haven in Consequence of the Enemy to the number of about 2 or 3000 Landing at Fairfield the Enemy having returned to their Ships again after going to Danbury & destroying a Large Store we were ordered no farther than N. Haven but were discharged on the Wednesday following I came home on Thirsday

Saturday May the 10 the first Division of Militia & the Alarm List were ordered to march to New Haven to guard My dady being included in the first Division marched on Sd. Day & was discharged on Friday June the 6th. & all returned home. Teusday June ye. 17th. A.D. 1777 About 50 of the Enemy Landed at Sachemshead in Guilford & burnt a house & a barn & carried off Some Stock in consequence of which Dady & myself Set out in great haste to go to Guilford but had gone but 2 or 3 miles before we heard that the enemy were got aboard of their Ships.

Saturday June ye. 21 a large Ship & Some tenders lay off against Killingworth we heard a number had landed down at the hamock my dady & myself Set out in haste to go to Town but it proved a false Alarm.

Sunday July ye. 20. there were 20 or 30 Sail of Ships in the Sound in consequence of which there came orders from Gen. Ward that all the Militia & Alarm List Should march to New Haven we went out in haste before meeting was done in the afternoon I went as far as Cohabit & had orders to return back I came home Monday morning.

August ye. 17th. I Sold my Watch for 30 Dollers which had Cost me more than 4 Dollers to keep in order while I had it. August 18 my Dady gave me a Deed of 12 acres of Land & I gave in a List of above 26 pounds.

Monday Septr. ye. 19th. was freemens meeting & I went to meeting & took the Oath of Fidelity & the freemans Oath. October ye. 8th AD. 1777. the Militia & Alarm List all that were at home had orders to march immediately to Peek's Kill in Consequence of about 4000 of the enemy's Landing below Peek's Kill but they having taken fort Montgomery we went no farther than N. Haven & had orders to return I came home friday Octr. ye. 11th.

Octr. ye. 17th. the British Army to the amount of more than 6000 including British Foreigners Canadians and Tory's under the command of Lieut. Genl. John Burgoyn Resigned themselves prisoners to Majr. Genl. Horatio Gates and the American Army at the Northward near Saratogue to the immortal honor of the Generals & american Army in the Northern Department.

My Dady was Society Committee the year 1777. I had the Care of keeping the Parish accounts which gave me much insight into transacting of Public business.

December ye. 8th. AD. 1777. was Society Meeting I was again Chosen Choirister for the year ensuing.

Decr. ye. 9. at a Town Meeting I was Chosen 2nd Constable which was very unexpected I therefore Postponed taking the Oath till the adjourned Town meeting Decr. 23d. On the 29th. of January at a meeting of the Proprietors of the Hartford Papers held at the House of Uriah Kelcey I was Chosen Clark to enter their doings.

December ye. 24th AD. 1777. I began to keep School in the Meeting House District I kept Day School 11 weeks my wages were £.4=10=0 per month exclusive of my night Schooll which I kept 2 nights in a week & had but one Shilling per Night. my Day School consisted of more than 30 but not more than 23 or 24 at once. I had frequently 18 or 19 at once in my Night School. I finished sd. School march ye. 19th. AD. 1778. On a training Day of Capt. Bristol's Company of Militia October ye. 19th. A.D. 1778 I was Chosen Serjeant of Sd. Company.

At a Society meeting December ye. 7th. A.D. 1778. I was again Chosen Choirister for the year ensuing. And at a Town meeting Decr. ye. 8th. I was Chosen first Constable to Collect the State Tax I took the oath on sd. Day.

November ye. 30th. A.D 1778 I begun to keep School in Meeting House District I kept 3 months Viz. Day School 10weeks.& 24 Nights which

Shortned the Day School 2 weeks. My wages were £2=10 per month the old way, or £15 in Continental Currency My Day School Consisted of 48 Scholars, but never more than 29 at once. Generally about 16 or 18 at once in the Night School. I finished Sd. School Febry. the 18th. AD.1779. At a meeting of the proprietors of the Connecticut Courant holden at Uriah Kelcey's February ye. 1779 I was chosen Clerk.

May ye. 29th 1779 at night there was a Large total Eclipse of the moon when the whole face of the moon was Darkened for one hour & 24 minutes.

July ye. 5th. 1779 The Militia & Alarm List were all ordered to march to New Haven In Consequence of about 2 or 3 thousand of the Enemy Landing at west Haven but before we could get there the Enemy march'd into New Haven Plundered all the Town & burnt Several Houses I went to East Haven & Staid till July ye. 7th. when the Enemy being gone on board we all returned home.

July ye. 8th. about midnight we were all ordered forthwith to Killingworth Town for the Enemy had burnt Fairfield Sd. Day & we expected them to Killingworth next Day but they Didnot come & we were Discharged July ye. 9th.

Thirsday July ye. 29th. I was Detached & one Quarter of the Militia & Alarm List to go to Killingworth town under Command of Capt. Baldwin we Did not march till Monday August ye. 2d. we Staid till Tuesday August ye. 24th. & then was Discharged.

At a Society Meeting December ye. 13th. 1779. I was chosen Choirister for the year Ensuing.

Decr. 14th. 1779. at a town meeting I was again Chosen first Constable to Collect the State Tax but refused, & then they Chose me Second Constable but I did not take the Oath till January ye. 28th. 1780.

December ye. 27th. A.D. 1779 I began to keep a School in meeting house District I keept. but 10 weeks & Shortned the time 10 Days by keeping 20 Nights my Day School Consisted of about 36 but not more than 30 at once my Night School Consisted of but about 13 & not more than 10 at once the fluctuateing State of our mony made me State my wags upon Specie my wages were £2:10:0 per month old way. I finished Sd. School March ye. 7th. 1780 the extremity of the weather necessitated me to put by the School almost a fortnight in the month of January.

May ye. 25th. AD. 1780 on Thirsday about 4 O'Clock afternoon I was Married to Mrs Lydia Redfield after an acquaintance of near 2 years tho' not Steady Courtship more than 7 or 8 months we were Married at Capt. Phinehas Meigs of East Guilford which had been her home from about 4 years old

I was about 6 weeks more than 24 years of age when married. & She wanted about 3 months of 24 years. I had a wedding of about 160 People at Killingth. tho' about half of them did not go to Guilford. Revd. Mr Todd Married us for which I gave him 80 Dollars Continental Money which by a Resolve of Congress was reckoned equal to two Silver Dollars.

On this occasion was Sung an Hymn Composed by myself for that purpose Entiluled A Marriage Hymn as follows. Viz.

1 Descend O Lord thy Blessing give,
Here may thy presence be;
As thou wast at a Marriage in
Cana of Galilee.

2 O May this couple who are join'd,
By Matrimonial tyes;
Be always one in heart & mind,
And Serve the Lord likewise.

3 O may they ever dwell with God,
And be the blessed house,
Who ev'ry day address the Lord,
And nightly pay their vows.

4 In peace & friendship may they live,
And join'd by mutual love:
Spending their Days in wisdom's ways,
Prepare to meet above.

5 That when this Globes consum'd in flams
And time and nature cease;
This happy pair may both unite
In Scenes of perfect peace.

6 And may each Soul that's here a guest,
Partake with Saints on high:
The Marriage Supper of the Lamb,
In Realms above the Sky.

At a Society meeting Decr. ye 4th. I was again Chosen Choirister: and at a Town meeting Decr. ye. 12th. I was again Chosen first Constable to Collect State Tax but refused. At the Adjourned meeting I was Chosen for a Lister & took the oath. At the above Sd. Society meeting Decr. ye. 4th. 1780 I was Chosen Society Treasurer for this parish.

November ye. 27th. 1780 I began to keep School in meeting house District in this place I kept 4 months my wages were £3 per month old way tho' for wheat I was to give S6 per Bushel I kept 33 Nights which Shortened my time my Day School consisted of 46 Scholars tho' not more than 40 at once my Night School consisted of 22 tho' not more than 16 at once.

May ye. 11th. on Friday about 9, O'Clock in the morning my wife was Delivered of a Female Child it was born alive but lived not more than 6 or 8 minutes it made Some noise once, it was Small as She was but about 5 Months & 22 Days gone.

To be continued

The price of these Bulletins is ten cents each.